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Marian Significance of Cana (John 2: 1-11)

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THE MARIAN SIGNIFICANCE OF CANA (JOHN 2: 1-11)

In the gospel narrative, Mary, the Mother of Christ, enters the scene of her Son's public ministry only three times: once at Cana (*Jn.* 2, 1-11); again, among a great crowd outside a house in Galilee when it was said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren are outside seeking thee" (*Mk.* 3, 32); and a third time when she stood at the foot of the cross on Calvary (*Jn.* 19, 25-27). On three other occasions, though she does not appear, reference is made to her: once by the woman who exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee" (*Lk.* 11, 27), after witnessing Christ's power over the evil spirit; again when Jesus was rejected at Nazareth by His townsmen who offensively asked, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (*Mk.* 6, 3); and a third time when the Jews murmured about Christ for calling Himself "the bread that has come down from heaven," and said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then does he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" (*Jn.* 6, 42). Twice when Mary was referred to as His Mother, Jesus extolled fulfillment of His Father's will as being a motherhood of a higher order than that brought about by the natural tie of flesh and blood (*Mk.* 3, 34-35; *Lk.* 11, 28).

These scenes and references, though small in number, are quite revealing as regards Our Lady's relationship both to Christ as Messiah and to the messianic people. The significance of Cana, which is our present concern, is far-reaching not only because it is the first manifestation of a new and public relationship to Christ, but also because it helps us understand more clearly the final scene in which the dying Savior bequeathes to Mary the spiritual motherhood of redeemed mankind. To appreciate the Marian significance of

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the Cana narrative a proper understanding of the text and context is a necessary prerequisite.

The account of the marriage feast at Cana stands at the beginning of Our Lord's public ministry. Mary was present. Jesus and His disciples were also invited. In the midst of the festivities Mary observes that the wine has failed, and at once foresees the embarrassment to which the bridal pair are sure to be exposed. In her maternal solicitude she calls the situation to the attention of her Son, seemingly with the assurance that He will alleviate the embarrassment. In answer to her statement, "They have no wine," she is told, literally, "What is it to me and to thee, woman? My hour has not yet come." Despite this answer, Mary seems confident of favorable action and addresses herself to the attendants, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus orders the six water jars used for rites of purification to be filled with water. This He changes into wine and then directs that the wine be drawn out and taken to the chief steward. The latter, not knowing whence the wine came, regards it of superior quality, remarking that, contrary to custom, the bridegroom has not served the good wine first but reserved it till the last. The evangelist concludes the narrative with the words: "This first of his signs Jesus worked at Cana of Galilee; and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him." The concluding sentence is the climax of the narrative and the key to the Messianic and Marian significance of Cana.

From the literary standpoint the account of the marriage feast is a simple, unembellished narrative. As with each of the seven miracles specifically mentioned in the fourth gospel prior to the Passion, reference is made to its intended effect of engendering faith in Christ. Unlike the others, however, the two Cana miracles are not followed by discourses on the symbolism of the miracle as, for example, the discourse on the Bread of Life which followed the multiplication of the loaves

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and the fishes, or the Savior's words on the resurrection and the life in connection with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The simplicity of the account is no doubt due to its source, Our Lady herself, who in her own quiet and discreet way became the occasion of the miracle without drawing any attention to herself but only to her Son.

I. *Some Problems of Interpretation*¹1. *Mary's Request*

First among the problems in the Cana narrative is the nature of Mary's remark, "They have no wine." For Boismard, Brunet, Maeso, and Van den Busche, Mary's words to her Son merely imply common concern or anxiety over the embarrassment of lack of sufficient wine. For Braun, Gächter and Deiss, Mary does not ask for a miracle explicitly but for relief from embarrassment for the bridal pair by some natural means; for Migliorini, Mary's words are an observation which Jesus accepts as a command from His Mother. For Galot, Ceroke and many others, Mary's words in the light of the context imply a request for a miracle.

Mary's statement, "They have no wine," is neither a mere womanly observation of the bridal couple's impending embar-

¹ Cf. F. M. Braun, O.P., *La Mère des fidèles* (3rd ed., Paris, 1954) 49-74; A. M. Brunet, *Les noces de Cana*, in *ER* 8 (1952) 9-23; C. Charlier, *Les noces de Cana*, in *BVC* 4 (1953-1954) 81-86; O. Cullmann, *Les sacrements dans l'évangile johannique* (Paris, 1951) 37-40; P. Gächter, S.J., *Maria im Erdenleben* (Munich, 1953) 155-200; J. Jeremias, *Jesus als der Weltvollender* (Gutersloh, 1930); R. Schnackenburg, *Das erste Wunder Jesu* (Freiburg-i-Br., 1951) 46; P. Boismard, O.P., *Du baptême à Cana* (Paris, 1956); H. Van den Busche, *Het Wijnwonder te Cana*, in *CG* 3 (1952) 1-33; D. G. Maeso, *Una lección de exégesis lingüística sobre el pasaje evangélico de las bodas de Caná*, in *CB* 11 (1954) 352-364; L. Deiss, *Marie, fille de Sion* (Paris, 1959) 216-226; B. L. Migliorini, O.F.M., *Annosa questione. "Nondum venit hora mea,"* in *PM* 31 (1956) 138-139; C. P. Ceroke, O.Carm., *Jesus and Mary at Cana: Separation or Association?*, in *TS* 17 (1956) 25; J. Galot, S.J., *Marie dans l'évangile* (Paris, 1958) 98-160.

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rassment nor anxiety over it with a hint to her divine Son to supply or have supplied in a natural manner a quantity of wine that might relieve the embarrassment. Certainly it is not a demand of her Son that wine be supplied by whatever means. It is an expression of sympathetic concern for the spouses, implying a delicate request of Christ to manifest His divine power in their behalf with full faith in His power, and confidence that He would perform a miracle, yet without any restriction of His complete freedom of action.

It cannot be objected that the request for a miracle is a gratuitous assumption. To expect that Jesus who had no material means would Himself furnish a supply of wine in a natural manner would be still more gratuitous. The expectation of an extraordinary means is to be gauged from Our Lord's reply, "My hour [for beginning to manifest my Messianic power] has not yet come"; from Mary's command to the attendants, "Do whatever he tells you"; and from the fact that Our Lord did actually work a miracle in response to Mary's plea for assistance from Him. We cannot view Mary's part in this event as the mere natural reaction of a sympathetic woman, without any religious import, without any thought on Mary's part of invoking His messianic power. Her supernatural faith in the power of her Son which inclined her to expect faith and obedience even of the attendants, indicates further that her words were no mere observation of an embarrassing situation, no mere hint to obtain more wine to prolong the festivities, but a tactful request to alleviate the need of the bridal couple by the power with which He was endowed in His public ministry. The same faith on Mary's part moves the "power of the Most High" to accomplish the miracle of the Incarnation in her, as the witness of her cousin Elizabeth clearly demonstrates: "Blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished."

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2. "What is it to me and to thee."²

Interpretations of this response of Jesus range from the notion of hostility to that of complete agreement. It occurs frequently in Sacred Scripture, also in Greek and Latin literature. In *Judges* 11, 12, the exact counterpart of the Cana passage, literally "What to me and to you," "What have you against me that you should come to fight with me in my land?"³ The implication is that there is nothing in common between Jephthe and the king of the Ammonites that would justify the latter in coming to take Israel's land by force.

In 2 *Sam.* 16, 10, "What have I in common with you, O sons of Sarvia,"⁴ King David rejects the offer of Abisai, the son of Sarvia, to defend him by beheading Semei who had cursed the king. Cf. also 2 *Sam.* 19, 23. In 3 *Kings* 17, 18 the widow of Sarepta asks Elias, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me that my iniquities should be remembered, and that you should kill my son?"⁵ The same phrase and the same sense is found in 4 *Kings* 3, 13 and in 2 *Par.* 35, 21. In the former passage the prophet Eliseus shows his opposition to the king of Israel with the words, "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and your mother." In the latter passage, Nechao, king of Egypt, who came to Charcamis by the Euphrates to fight, tells Josias, king of Juda, through a messenger, that he did not come to fight against him. Moreover he warns him not to fight, "What have I to do with you, O king of Juda? . . . Forbear to do against God who is with me, lest he kill you." Cf. also 4 *Kings* 9, 18f; *Os.* 14, 9; *Jer.* 2, 18. In all these instances of the Scriptures a negative, never a positive, answer

² *Ti emoi kai soi, gynai.*³ *Mah-li wälāk.*⁴ *Mah-li welākem.*⁵ *Mah-li wälāk.*

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is expected to the rhetorical question, as Gächter rightly remarks.⁶

In *Mt.* 8, 29, "What have we to do with you, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" and in the parallel passages, *Mk.* 5, 7, *Lk.* 8, 28, also in *Mk.* 1, 24 and *Lk.* 4, 34 the same negative answer is expected, meaning that we have nothing in common. In *Mt.* 27, 19 the wife of Pontius Pilate warns her husband concerning Christ, "Have nothing to do with that just man."

The formula under consideration has the same sense in its frequent occurrences in classical and koine Greek, as well as in that of the Hellenistic period, besides in classical and in later Latin.⁷

The preponderance of evidence concerning the biblical as well as extra-biblical use of the formula "Quid mihi et tibi" clearly indicates a lack of common bond between persons relative to the particular situation found in the context. Though the question is formulated positively, a negative reply is expected.

If then we turn our attention to the passage in question, "Quid mihi et tibi?"⁸ the sense is, "What have I to do with you" or "What is there common to us" uttered in a tone of friendliness in this context, not of reproof. The context shows that Jesus is now engaged in His public ministry. The authority Mary had over her Son in His hidden life no longer constitutes the bond, that is, no longer exists in His public ministry. This is not to be taken as an affront any more than other passages of the Gospel in which Our Lord clearly shows the difference between natural and supernatural relationship to Him, e.g. "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?

⁶ Gächter, *op. cit.*, 176.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

⁸ *Ti emoi kai soi.*

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Whoever does the will of my Father, he is my brother and sister and mother." (*Mt.* 12, 48, 50). When Mary and Joseph found the boy Christ in the temple after they had sought Him three days sorrowing and asked, "Son, why hast thou done so to us?", He replied, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?". Jesus' reply was meant to inform and to teach, not to reprove. He had just reached the legal age of responsibility for fulfilling the Law. In His Father's designs He was to manifest even to the doctors of the Law in the temple the true wisdom and knowledge of the Law and its purpose.

3. *Woman*

In the Greek text the equivalent of "woman" is in the vocative case. Wackernagle's treatise on some ancient forms of address contains numerous examples of this usage in Greek antiquity: (a) a husband to his wife; (b) a man to any woman, spoken with deference and respect; (c) as an address to women of royalty; (d) of servants to their mistresses; (e) an honorable address commonly used toward women.⁹

In the gospels Our Lord addresses the Samaritan woman (*Jn.* 4, 21), the woman taken in adultery (8, 10), Mary Magdalen (20, 15), the Canaanite woman (*Mt.* 15, 28), and the woman suffering from a curvature (*Lk.* 13, 12) with the same term "woman." Certainly the use of the term implies honor and respect in each instance. The same is true of *Jn.* 2, 4 and 19, 26. The difference in the last two instances from all the other examples cited is the fact that Our Lord is not addressing just any woman, stranger or well known, but His own Mother. Since the Johannine use is without parallel, the exact nuance is still difficult to determine. Neither in antiquity nor

⁹ J. Wackernagel, *Über einige antike Anredeformen* (Göttingen, 1912) 25-26.

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today does the usage prevail of a son addressing his mother as "woman."¹⁰

Jesus surely used this designation purposely. This change from the name "mother" to woman at this time would seem to indicate that Jesus did not wish the relationship of natural motherhood and authority to be the basis of Mary's dealings with Him in His public life and ministry of salvation. If anything, the address "woman" instead of "mother" confirms our interpretation of "Quid mihi et tibi?" Recalling that later in His ministry Jesus said, "Who are my mother and my brethren? . . . Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother,"¹¹ we may infer that faith and adherence to His Father's will, rather than natural motherhood and authority are to be the bases of the relationship of Mary and Jesus in Our Lord's ministry of salvation. This is also in accordance with His teaching, properly understood, that "if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."¹²

Considering the fact that Our Lord did heed His Mother's request, even to the extent of working His first miracle, the title "woman" with which He addressed her must in some way be related to His public ministry. Father Gächter considers the title to have had a messianic import deriving from the messianic context of Our Lord's response, "My hour has not yet come."¹³ While subscribing to this messianic implication of Christ's deliberate and special use of the title "woman" in response to His Mother's request, Galot maintains that the messianic use was only implicit, and that as far as Mary was concerned, the substitution of "woman" for "mother" signi-

¹⁰ Cf. E. Power, "*Quid mihi et tibi, mulier? Nondum venit hora mea,*" in *VD* 2 (1922) 130.

¹¹ *Mk.* 3, 35.

¹² *Lk.* 14, 26.

¹³ Gächter, *op. cit.*, 190.

fied for her that Jesus did not wish to consider the natural title of mother in her regard. He considers that Mary understood this address of Our Lord to have a broader intent, without knowing precisely what intent, and that this address was rather a messianic orientation than a clearly formulated messianic expression.¹⁴ In the relatively small number of instances in which Mary appears, or is referred to, in Our Lord's public ministry, Jesus seems persistent in setting aside her natural relationship of mother, even when He was dying on the Cross. It may rightly, therefore, be inferred that He wished only His messianic relationship toward Mary to prevail in His entire public ministry. What this relationship is, seems also capable of more precise determination. The performance at the beginning of His ministry, and at Mary's request, of His first miracle to which the beginning of the public manifestation of the glory of His messiahship was attached, and the bequest at the close of His ministry which Jesus made of His Mother to redeemed mankind through the beloved disciple, inclines us to the conclusion that the address "woman" was a counterpart of the designation of Himself as "Son of man." Both "Son of man" and "woman" would indicate in the first place that both belonged to the ordinary race of human beings, but also that both enjoyed an altogether and singular position, Christ, that of Son of God and Messiah besides mere man, and Mary that of "the woman" in God's plan of salvation, i.e. the Mother of the messianic people.

4. *My hour has not yet come.*¹⁵

This text is usually regarded as the key to the understanding of the Cana narrative. The term "hour" in St. John's Gospel may refer to: (a) a moment of time, e.g. "the tenth hour" (1, 39); (b) a short time, e.g. "a while" (5, 35); (c)

¹⁴ Galot, *op. cit.*, 126.

¹⁵ *Oypō ēkei ē ōra moy.*

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the time for something to take place, e.g. "when the time for them has come you may remember" (16, 4); the emphasis is more on what happens than on the time it happens; (d) a new phase of Christ's messianic work, already begun, or still to begin, e.g. "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (4, 23). In many instances, "hour" refers to the death, resurrection and Ascension of Christ (13, 1; 17, 1f); in others it refers to the time of Christ's passion and death. In 7, 30 "they [the Jews] wanted therefore to seize him [to put him to death, cf. v. 20] but no one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come." Cf. also 8, 20; 12, 23, 27.

In Jn. 2, 4 "my hour" refers to a time for doing something pertaining to the messianic work of Christ. The context as well as the general framework of the gospel must determine the sense of "my hour" in this passage. Cullmann considers it to be a reference to the time or hour for changing wine into the blood of Christ at the Last Supper. Brunet considers "the hour" to mean the time of Christ's death when His power to work miracles will cease. At present He possesses that power. Braun, Gächter and Van den Busche understand "my hour" to refer to Christ's death. When it comes, Mary will again find Jesus submissive to her. In this way Jesus draws Mary's attention to spiritual rather than temporal realities to be concerned about. Boismard regards "the hour" as that of Christ's glorification, exaltation, the hour of returning to the Father. The hour of miracles whereby Jesus manifests His glory is the beginning, or complement of the full manifestation of His glory through His resurrection. Ceroke understands it to be the hour of miracles which Jesus is awaiting as soon to take place. Others¹⁶ understand Our Lord's reply to be, not a declaration, but a question: "Has not my hour come yet?" This

¹⁶ Cf. Boismard, *op. cit.*, 156f.; J. Michl, *Bemerkungen zu Johannes 2:4*, in *Bibl* 36 (1955) 492-509.

solution finds the word "yet" difficult to explain, and still more difficult the Savior's previous question, "What have I to do with you?"

Unlike the texts alleged which refer to Christ's passion, the context of *Jn. 2, 4* does not contain any immediate reference whatever to the passion and death of Christ. Such a reply would have been unintelligible to His Mother by whom it was intended to be understood.

The evangelist's remark in the context of the Cana narrative, "This first of his signs Jesus worked . . . and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him," indicates that the "hour" in question is to be understood of the time of beginning to manifest His glory through the messianic power of miracles. True, it is the beginning of this hour or time which will continue, as the remainder of the gospel shows, through further such manifestations until it reaches its climax in the final and complete glorification of Christ in the miracles of His resurrection and Ascension (cf. *Jn. 13, 1; 17, 1f*).

A difficulty still remains to be solved: if Christ's hour of manifesting His glory through His messianic power of miracles has not yet come, and if He is unwilling to permit any intervention of Mary on the basis of the ties of natural motherhood, why then does He commence that "hour" almost at once by working a miracle and thereby manifesting His glory?

Though Mary's request is not to be granted on the basis of natural motherhood, it can be granted, and in reality is granted on the basis of divine faith. If flesh and blood in themselves have no part in the messianic kingdom, faith is the very foundation of the kingdom and the beginning of new life in the kingdom. It was altogether fitting that the first of Christ's followers to manifest this faith in His divinity should be His own Mother. Because she believed that those things were fulfilled which were "promised her by the Lord" (*Lk. 1, 45*), the

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Son of God became man in her womb. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory—glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth" (1, 14). Again, because of her faith in Christ's divinity, and her willingness to put aside the authority deriving from her natural maternity, Christ begins His "hour" of manifesting His divinity.

The hour of Christ, otherwise seemingly decreed to begin under different circumstances, is now freely willed by the Father and His co-equal Son to commence at once in response to the humble request of the woman whose faith, by the will of the Father, brought His Son from heaven to earth at Nazareth, and whose faith is again instrumental in having Him publicly manifested to others at Cana.

Since the term "hour" refers not so much to the time as to the event which begins or continues to take place, there is no contradiction in Our Lord's repudiation of natural relationship as the motive for asserting His divinity, while quickly granting the request that persists on the basis of perfect faith in the same divinity.

The Chanaanite woman was also refused her request for curing her daughter as she invoked Jesus' natural relationship as son of David, only to be told that He "was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the faith and perseverance of the woman who came and worshiped him, saying "Lord, help me," and again, "Yes, Lord, even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table," drew an immediate favorable response of the miraculous cure of her daughter. "Jesus answered and said to her, "Woman, great is thy faith. Let it be done to thee as thou wilt" (*Mt.* 15, 22-28).

The "hour" of Christ then in this context is understood to mean the time for beginning the public manifestation of His glory through the messianic power of miracles as a means of

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accomplishing His work of salvation. This hour now begun would reach its fullness in the glory resulting from the Passion, namely, the resurrection and return to the Father.

5. Mary's Word to the Attendants

"Do whatever he tells you." The text implies that Mary expected Jesus to tell the attendants what to do, without implying that she knew what He would tell them. The indetermination of what Jesus would command lies in the use of the indefinite relative pronoun. It is expected that He will give some order to the attendants. We noted above that this confidence, even assurance, which Mary manifests concerning the intervention of Jesus cannot be construed as a hope that He would obtain wine through some natural means provided directly or indirectly by Himself. Such action on her part would have had little bearing on His messianic work. Through her faith in the messianic power of her Son, Mary confidently expects that Jesus will assist the bridal couple by this power. She manifests her own strong faith, and by exacting obedience of the attendants, also tests their faith, or rather inspires faith in them. The faith of Mary is all the more marvelous because she does not importune Jesus beyond her original request, yet perseveres in believing and trusting for help from Him.

The efficacy of prayer was well known to Mary. The angel's assurance at the hour of the Annunciation that Mary had found favor with God continued throughout her life. She was further assured at that time that "nothing is impossible with God" (*Lk.* 1, 37). It was her faith in the same divine omnipotence that is so richly rewarded at the commencement of Jesus' public life just as it was rewarded at the beginning of His hidden life. It causes Christ's hour of supernatural manifestation of His power to benefit the disciples of Jesus with the beginnings of divine faith.

II. *Theological Significance of the Cana Narrative*

In the light of our understanding and interpretation of the Cana narrative, of its text and context, the broad features of Marian significance stand forth in bold relief. These features can best be arranged and presented according to the influence which Mary had over the various persons or classes of people who attended the marriage feast. First and foremost is Christ Himself. During His hidden life attention was focused on His humanity and on Mary's motherhood according to the flesh. In commencing His public life attention must be drawn to His divinity veiled by His humanity, and to a new relationship of Mary to Christ since she is not the mother of His divinity.

Mary's motherhood, therefore, must not be a hindrance to acceptance of, and belief in Christ's divinity since she is not the mother of His divinity. Yet it pleased God that Mary's association with her divine Son should not be limited to the mysteries of Christ's hidden life. There was to be a new relationship of Mary to Christ in this new phase of His life, namely, His public ministry. This new relationship is well expressed both by referring to the inadequacy of the natural bond or relationship alone. "What have I to do with you?" and by the use of the new title "Woman." By this title Mary is placed among the common ranks of all women who follow Him through faith in His divinity, but more than this, because of her perfect faith in His divinity, she is given first place as *the woman* through whose influence Jesus worked His first miracle and thereby manifested the glory of His messianic power so that others too might believe in Christ through the benefit of her intercession. Mary thus becomes the close associate and collaborator with her Son in achieving the work of His public ministry, namely, the manifestation of His office as Messiah and Son of God. Her function as collaborator is demonstrated by the part she played in bringing about

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the performance of Christ's first miracle and the accomplishment of its purpose, belief in Him on the part of the disciples.

Though the hour, that is, the time for beginning Christ's public manifestation of His glory, could have been later, and under different circumstances, in reality it begins at Cana during the marriage feast, through Mary's intercession, with the consent of the Father and the Son.

In the light of the gospel of St. John, this new relationship of Mary becomes even clearer. In the "hour" of Nazareth and of Bethlehem Mary's personal relationship of Mother of Christ is revealed. Since the Word, first and foremost, was born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God," we see here the first manifestation of His glory "as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (*Jn.* 1, 14).

Cana is then the scene of the second phase of Christ's manifestation of glory which in turn prepares the way for the third and final scene. At the "hour" of Calvary, when through His words "Woman, behold thy son; Son, behold thy mother" (*Jn.* 19, 26 f) Jesus reveals the fullness of Mary's role, seen less clearly and through the sign of the first miracle at Cana, but now in the fullness of her office of Mother of all the redeemed, of *the Woman* through whom countless others come to "receive," i.e., believe in Christ, and who also are born now, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God" sharing through Mary in the very life of her Son of whose fullness of grace we have all received. But the hour of Calvary would be meaningless as an hour of glorification without the necessary complement of Christ's Resurrection and return to the Father where Mary's relationship to Christ in glory continues through endless ages.

Having just referred to Mary's spiritual motherhood at Calvary, we need but see its relation to the hour of the manifestation of Christ's glory at Cana, according to the text, "He

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manifested his glory and his disciples believed in Him" (*Jn.* 2, 11).

While the faith of the disciples in Christ's messiahship is directly related to Christ's miracle at Cana, Mary's part in obtaining this miracle applies also the effects of the miracle. She is therefore the instrumental cause of their faith in the messiahship of Christ, and of the beginning of their faith in His divinity. And since even the beginning of faith in Christ's divinity is also the commencement of the new life of grace, we see here the beginning or sign of Mary's spiritual motherhood.

The purpose of the entire gospel of St. John is contained in his epilogue: "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name" (*Jn.* 20, 30).

Christ's purpose in performing His miracles is no different from the evangelist's purpose in recording them: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, you may have life in his name." Christ's own words express the same thing: "If you are not willing to believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father" (*Jn.* 10, 38).

The Cana narrative also reveals the function of Mary in relation to the attendants. We have seen their confidence in Mary and their willingness to obey Christ's command after being disposed to do so by Mary, "Do whatever he tells you." This role of Mary of disposing people to obey, and through obedience to come to believe in Christ, is another phase of collaboration in the messianic activity of her Son.

The bridal couple also experience the benefits of Mary's presence through the dignity she brought to the marriage

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feast, and the relief of their embarrassment to fulfill satisfactorily their hospitality toward the marriage guests.

Thus, the ordinary things of human life, even material things, are not beneath the sphere of Mary's care and influence, nor are they to be excluded from entering the sphere of the life of the spirit.

III. *Marian Significance in the Universal Framework of the Economy of Salvation*

The Marian significance of the Marriage Feast of Cana extends still further when viewed in the universal framework of the economy of salvation. In this way the Cana narrative expands into new dimensions which enhance Mary's role in the messianic work of salvation.

In the relationship of Mary to Jesus in His public ministry, a relationship of the "woman" who collaborates with Him in His work of salvation, we recognize the New Eve. The first Eve, through disobedience and pride in wishing to be like God, disfigured the image of God in herself and became the instrumental cause of her husband doing the same. Thus the whole human race was involved in sin and death. Mary, on the contrary, with firm faith in Christ as Messiah and Son of God, submits completely to His will and that of the Father. She is thus made the instrument in directing mankind back to God by belief in the messiahship of His Son (and incipiently, at least, in His divinity) and by obedience to His will. This submission to Christ through faith and obedience elevates men and disposes them for the restoration of what was lost through the first Adam, influenced by the first Eve. We have already seen how Mary's faith and complete adherence to God's will disposed her to become the Mother of the Messiah at Nazareth and the Mother of redeemed humanity on Calvary.

The Savior's use of a wedding feast to introduce His mes-

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sianic work is an appropriate and altogether fitting concrete expression of His own later teaching concerning the king who prepared a wedding and its accompanying feast for his son (*Mt.* 22, 1-13). The wedding in the parable is the marriage between divinity and humanity in Christ. The manifestation of Christ's glory to the guests and the benefit to them of the beginnings of faith in Christ is the feast or banquet. Again the symbol of the water jars for ritual purification is seen by some authors as a type of the marriage feast of the Old Covenant which is no longer able to supply its guests with refreshment, and is therefore to be replaced by the wedding feast of the New Covenant. At this feast the Bridegroom furnished an unlimited supply of the wine of new life. Christ is the source of supply and Mary becomes the channel through which this new life flows.

The fullness, indeed the consummation of the Bridegroom's love for His bride, the Church, occasions another banquet, a further development of the first. At this banquet of the Last Supper Jesus gives to His guests the drink of His own blood, supplied at the cost of His very life. It is the life-giving wine that will never fail because it is His Blood which is shed for the life of the world.

Mary was not present at the banquet of the Last Supper. Presence at this table was reserved to Christ's priests. Her part in it, however, is soon to be made clear, for just as her intercession obtained the miracle of the wine at Cana, her presence at the foot of the Cross, and her share in Christ's passion, helped to obtain for all Christ's followers the saving gift of His life-giving Blood of the Eucharistic banquet held the evening before in anticipation of the fruit of His passion and death on the morrow.

Through Mary, Christ's miracle at Cana introduces to the world the beginning of the public manifestation of His divinity which till then was hidden from the world by the humanity

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which Mary gave to Christ. This public manifestation also marks the beginning of the revelation of the mystery of the union of divinity and humanity in Christ, within the framework of the historic, yet also symbolic, occasion of the wedding feast at Cana. The presence of Christ, God and Man, sanctified human marriage and engendered what was destined to develop into the mystical marriage between Christ and the Church through His sleep of death on the Cross. The banquet of this marriage we have seen to be the Eucharistic feast of His body and blood.

Through the role of the Woman the personal marriage of Christ in the Incarnation took place at the hour of Nazareth; at the hour of Cana the presence and mediation of the Woman brought about the beginning of the public manifestation of the mystery of Nazareth, and at the same time planted the seed of the mystical marriage of Christ with mankind; at the hour of Calvary the Woman is not only present at the consummation of Christ's mystical marriage with redeemed mankind through His saving death; she is not only a co-operator in providing the Eucharistic banquet; indeed she is the first fruits of the redemption, and as such becomes the Mother of all the redeemed. As this banquet continues through the temporal life of the Church, the Woman continues to use her intercession until the full and lasting manifestation of Christ's glory takes place when "the marriage of the Lamb" will have come and His spouse, the Church triumphant, will have prepared herself "clothed in fine linen" of just deeds, and all will rejoice to hear the welcome, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb," where the Mother of Jesus, and indeed the Mother of all the just, will ever be (*Ap.* 19, 7-9).

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